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Sent: Friday, February 23, 2018 9:39 AM

To: 'laurie.ross@wisconsin.gov'

Subject: Nat. Res. Board agenda DNR/Kohler Co. land exchange and easement

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed DNR/Kohler Company land exchange and easement to be presented to the Natural Resources Board. This land exchange agreement between State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources officials and Kohler Company representatives can only be described as “outrageous”. One can only surmise that this so-called “agreement” borders on illegal misuse of public office or even collusion for agreeing to trade publicly-owned state park land for the sole purpose of appeasing a single private company for their own profit. I have read the Natural Resource Board “green sheet” as composed by the DNR and no doubt with much input from the Kohler company. It is clear that there is more to this than the many mis-truths it contains.

I ask the Natural Resources Board to reject such an illegally negotiated land exchange and easement. This agreement was completed with “no” public involvement and will lead to the permanent loss of valuable and rare sand dune ecosystem owned by the people of Wisconsin. Now it is being pushed through the Natural Resource board within a couple weeks of announcing the agreement with the Kohler Company in hopes no doubt that it will be approved before the general public has even heard of it.

My opposition is based on the following:

- It is completely “false” to describe the 4.59 acres of state park land to be given to the Kohler company as “no longer needed for the state’s use for conservation purposes” and it “not being used for any park functions or services”. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I appeal to the Nat. Res. Board members to walk this area in person before agreeing with this false statement. This part of the park is the same geologically as the rare Lake Michigan sand dune ecosystem adjacent to it. It is heavily wooded with mature white pine, beech and other old-age trees and has some open sand dune formations and interdunal wetlands. It is true that there are no trails or buildings in this part of the park but this was done intentionally as part of the existing property master plan. This area is used extensively and is home to all types of permanent and migratory wildlife throughout the year and is visited by state park hikers and wildlife watchers.
- Kohler Company intends to level the majority of this state park property, bulldoze out nearly all the trees, and fill in the sand dune formations including the small wetlands. They will then build at least three shop building facilities totaling over 30,000 square feet. In addition to these large shop buildings, they would pave several parking lots, large paved road systems and smaller crushed limestone roads for golf cart use. The entire maintenance area would be enclosed in chain link fencing to keep the public out of the area.
- Besides the development on the deeded state park property the Kohler Company demands a 1.88 acre easement on which they would build a large paved entrance roadway from the park entrance to their golf course and to their maintenance building. This would include a massive round-about roadway to be built north of the existing state park visitor center. Both of these construction plans would also permanently alter and destroy the existing sand dune formations in the proposed easement area. The public entrance to the state park would also hamper

access to the park by campers and day users by dramatically increasing the traffic entering from County Hwy V. The state park entrance already serves more than 400,000 visitors each year and the roadway is already often blocked up with incoming traffic on weekends and at special event days. The addition of Kohler's golf course traffic will make vehicle entrance and exit much worse than it is now even with the addition of a round-about structure.

- The DNR's asserts in the green sheet proposal that the development of these massive maintenance facilities and road construction locations would be "adequately landscaped and screened" and that "its use will not compromise park aesthetics and that its proposed future use will be compatible with adjacent park uses." I believe it's pretty clear from anyone's perspective that Kohler's development plans to destroy forever this rare habitat in the sand dune areas of the state park by road building and maintenance shop area construction could never be aesthetic in anyone's view and could never be compatible with the preservation of this geologically significant area of the state.
- I am very familiar with the property Kohler purchased recently. The former "Pine Rocks Stable" property is an area that is nearly devoid of trees and has been flattened and bulldozed into large, grassless area fenced in for horseback riding areas. It has one residence and several outbuilding sheds, barns and stables including a very large indoor riding area. The DNR says the residence would be used by park employees. This would be expensive to maintain and really not needed in my opinion. The park already has and maintains a park residence for this purpose. The other buildings on this site are to be used for park storage. This need is also questionable since the park already has several storage facilities in the park including 6-stall maintenance shop with two heated stalls and a shop office. If this "exchanged" property is really used by the park as described it would most certainly would have to be posted as off-limits and "no entry" by park visitors so there would clearly be a loss to the public here. If the state decides not to use it for a residence and shop storage then the state would be obligated to tear down all the structures, abandon the wells and septic systems and re-landscape the entire area back to a more normal park use area. This would cost the state tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of reclamation dollars to achieve. In addition the proposed exchanged land is surrounded by state park wetland on two sides so there is no ability to reach the property from the existing park making it impossible to use this area of the park even if it was opened to the public.
- It seems clear this land was obtained for the sole purpose of convincing the state to exchange property and avoid the very negative public response they received earlier for attempting to give away state park land to a private company. Clearly the exchange of property and easement are not in compliance with Federal rules on LAWCON 6 (f) which prohibits giving publicly-owned state park land to private individuals or corporations/companies unless under specific and unusual circumstances or a special need by the community. How could giving away rare sand dune public park lands to a for-profit private company to build a massive maintenance facility and an entrance road over the state park to their private golf course meet this description of "need"?
- The Kohler company has yet to obtain all the necessary permits from the state and federal government to build their golf course facility. It would seem very premature to approve or even consider a land exchange with the DNR at this time and as described above. I feel it would never be in the best interest of the citizens of Wisconsin to allow the exchange and

destruction of this valuable and rare publically-owned sand dune area to the Kohler Company or any other private entity for the sole purpose of private profit. This is NOT what the DNR nor the Wisconsin State Park system stands for.

Thank you for considering my comments

James Buchholz
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(Former) Kohler-Andrae State Park Superintendent (27 years)